

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-9: (canceled).

10 (currently amended): A highly endurable heat insulating material ~~comprising~~ consisting essentially of being provided on the surface of a layer of inorganic heat insulating fibers with a flame sprayed film of a fire-resistant ceramic substance through the medium of a coating film of a surface hardening material.

11 (previously presented): A highly endurable heat insulating material according to claim 10, wherein the inorganic heat insulating fiber is formed of one member or a combination of two or more members selected from the group consisting of alumina-silica substance, clay substance, zirconia, mullite, zircon, magnesia, calcia, dolomite, silicon carbide, silicon nitride, and carbon fibers.

12 (previously presented): A highly endurable heat insulating material according to claim 10, wherein the high-temperature property of the surface hardening material is similar to the high-temperature property of the flame sprayed film of a fire-resistant ceramic substance.

13 (previously presented): A highly endurable heat insulating material according to claim 10, wherein the fire-resistant ceramic substance is at least one member selected from the group consisting of simple substances of alumina-silica substance, refractory clay, zirconia, mullite, zircon, magnesia, calcia, dolomite, corundum, bauxite, alumstone, silicon carbide, and chromite and complexes thereof.

14 (currently amended): In the production of a highly endurable heat insulating material according to claim 10, a method for production of the highly endurable heat insulating material comprising coating the surface of the inorganic heat insulating fiber with the raw material composition for the surface hardening material and then ~~lava~~ flame spraying a fire resistant ceramic powder material on the raw material composition of the surface hardening material thereby forming a coating film of the surface hardening material and the flame sprayed film of the heat-resistant ceramic substance.

15 (previously presented): A furnace comprising possessing a highly endurable heat insulating material set forth in claim 10 as part or whole of a fire-resistant article.

16 (previously presented): A smoke discharging device comprising possessing a highly endurable heat insulating material set forth in claim 10 as part or whole of a fire-resistant article.

17 (previously presented): A tunnel comprising possessing a highly endurable heat insulating material set forth in claim 10 as part or whole of a fire-resistant article.

18 (previously presented): In working a highly endurable heat insulating material for the use set forth in claim 15, a working method comprising setting an inorganic heat insulating fiber on an iron skin, a fire-resistant substrate, or concrete, applying a surface hardening agent to

the surface of the fiber, and subsequently forming a film of a fire-resistant ceramic substance by flame spraying on the coat of the surface hardening agent.

19 (previously presented): In working a highly endurable heat insulating material for the use set forth in claim 16, a working method comprising setting an inorganic heat insulating fiber on an iron skin, a fire-resistant substrate, or concrete, applying a surface hardening agent to the surface of the fiber, and subsequently forming a film of a fire-resistant ceramic substance by flame spraying on the coat of the surface hardening agent.

20 (previously presented): In working a highly endurable heat insulating material for the use set forth in claim 17, a working method comprising setting an inorganic heat insulating fiber on an iron skin, a fire-resistant substrate, or concrete, applying a surface hardening agent to the surface of the fiber, and subsequently forming a film of a fire-resistant ceramic substance by flame spraying on the coat of the surface hardening agent.